

The New Darcy and Elizabeth: How we are Re-Constructing Austen's
Characters in Modern Novels

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Introduction

It's a humid, July night and the wool of the gentleman's breeches is starting to chafe. He would like to cool off by removing his neckcloth or waistcoat, but that would not be proper at an assembly such as this. The gentleman bows to his partner and takes her hand for the next quadrille. The couple joins the other pairs in the center of the room and the lady curtsies to her partner as the music swells and the gentleman taps his leather boot to the beat. She reaches across the aisle and takes the gentleman's hand in her gloved one. She smiles and he smiles in response as she nervously adjusts the ivory comb decorating her upswept hair. She follows her partner's lead and soon she is part of the lively dancing and the embroidered cuff of her petticoat shows as she swings round and round the assembly. The set ends, the gentleman bows to his partner, the lady curtsies, and in a moment the whole process will begin anew.

On Monday the gentleman will go back to his job as an accountant and his partner will return to her classroom of fifth-graders. But Monday is two days away, and for this weekend they will adopt the manners of Regency England. They've come to Louisville, Kentucky in order to walk the line between reality and long-gone world of a Jane Austen novel.

The people described in the above scene were attendees of the Second Annual Jane Austen Ball sponsored by the local chapter of the Jane Austen Society of North America.¹ JASNA Louisville hosted a weekend of festivities for Jane Austen enthusiasts from all over the United States and even Canada. In their inaugural year, 2008, the

¹ Appendix, *Austen in Action*

festival was visited by 700 people.² Attendees at this year's events had the opportunity to attend educational lectures about the world of Jane Austen, watch a Regency fashion show, shop at specialty booths, and engage in a community of like-minded individuals united by their devotion to the same author.

Jane Austen has a dedicated and enthusiastic following. Fans of Austen are dubbed "Janeites" after a short story by Rudyard Kipling about a military club that uses knowledge about Austen characters as a requirement for admission into a secret society.

Jane Austen was an English author best known for her novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion*. She completed a total of six novels in her lifetime and left behind several fragments that have since been completed by other authors. Though Austen is best-remembered for her literary romances, she never married and died at the age of 42. Austen's writing lost popularity after her death, but interest was revived in the author after her nephew, Edward Austen-Leigh, published a biography using a combination of her personal accounts and his own recollections.

In *The Friendly Jane Austen*, Natalie Tyler outlines the four schools of Jane Austen scholars; the Janeites, those who believe in "Gentle Jane," "Ironic Jane," and "Subversive Jane."³ According to Tyler, Janeites are dedicated to Austen to the point that they cannot find fault with their favorite author. Members of this school believe that Austen "provides an alternate romantic reality more attractive than real life with its wars and deaths" (11). Members of Tyler's second school, Gentle Jane, believe that Austen depicts a world where goodness is rewarded with a happy ending. Members of this school think that Austen "is not merely a beloved escape and consolation, but one who

² Jane Austen Society Louisville. <http://www.jasnalouisville.com/>. Accessed 9 Aug 2009.

³ *The Friendly Jane Austen*, pages 11-13

represents an attainable reality of a pleasantly well-ordered life” (11). Tyler’s third school is Ironie Jane. This academy celebrates Jane for her highly developed sense of irony. The fourth and final school is the school of Subversive Jane. Subversive Jane schools consider Austen to be a “protofeminist...and an innovator, ahead of her time in every way” (12).

Despite having died almost two hundred years ago, Austen is booming in today’s market. She and her characters have become valuable commodities on a global scale. Because none of Austen’s writings are still under copyright, her plots, characters, and entire novels belong to the public domain. Any person can use her words or reconstruct her intellectual property without paying royalties or fees for permission. This free access allows more merchants to sell goods based on her novels, film directors to use her plots, and writers to commandeer her characters.

Austen is also enveloped by a literary tourism industry. Every year, thousands of Janeites visit the Jane Austen Centre in Bath and Austen’s last home, Chawton House. Fans of the films can also purchase guides to direct them to the film locations of their favorite Austen adaptations. It is their opportunity to walk in the footsteps of their favorite characters and imagine themselves as part of the film.

Visiting the Jane Austen Centre is the adult equivalent to visiting Disneyworld. It is fun, crowded, and exciting. At the same time, there is an all-encompassing simulacrum surrounding the exhibits. Everything is made new to look old. It lacks authenticity and feels like a watered-down, user friendly Austen. Outside the entrance, there is a ceramic statue of Jane Austen. People walking by and tourists take pictures of themselves with the life-sized statue. A male employee stands by the statue in full

Regency Dress.⁴ The Jane Austen Centre is very commercially driven. It has both a gift shop and a tea room where the most popular, and expensive, item is a traditional English tea setting called “Tea with Mr. Darcy.”

If the Jane Austen Centre is like Disneyworld, then Chawton House is like Epcot. Chawton is steeped with historical integrity and exhibits dedicated to learning. One can see the actual table at which Austen wrote *Emma* and *Persuasion* as well as sit and enjoy a library of Austen-related books in one of the cottage’s spare rooms.

People travel to Bath, Chawton, and JAS festivals from all over the world. They take off work, use vacation days, spend hundreds of dollars on costumes and merchandise, and invite their friends along to share in the adventure.

Just as Austen has inspired a legion of fans, she has also inspired a legion of writers to recreate or write continuations of her works. The first Jane Austen sequel was written in 1914. The book, *Old Friends and New Fancies*, reunited characters from all six of Austen’s books and tied up any loose ends that Austen left behind. *Old Friends* was just the first in a potentially endless line of Austen-inspired texts.

There are several types of Austen-inspired books. The most popular are modern books featuring the characters of *Pride and Prejudice*. There are sequels, prequels, updates to modern times, and even Austen’s plot told again from another character’s point of view. Since 2005, there have been at least five *Pride and Prejudice* retellings that tell the story through Mr. Darcy’s point of view⁵. Other characters that have gotten their own stories are Lydia Bennet, Miss Bingley, Miss de Burgh, and Charlotte Lucas. There are books about Jane Austen living the Elizabeth Bennet storyline, wherein Jane had a love affair with a man who later served as inspiration for Mr. Darcy as well as

⁴ Appendix, Austen in Action

⁵ *Confessions of Fitzwilliam Darcy*, *Darcy’s Story*, *Mr. Darcy’s Diary* (There are two different novels with this title), and *An Assembly Such as This: A Novel of Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman*

series of novels in which Jane is an amateur detective, using her keen powers of observation to solve crimes. Additionally, there are books about modern women meeting and attracting both historical and modern reincarnations of Mr. Darcy. The number of retellings, sequels, and pastiches of Austen's works number well above one hundred. There are at least sixty versions of the *Pride and Prejudice* storyline alone.⁶ With all these writers putting their pens to Austen's stories and characters, there is bound to be some accidental and purposeful character manipulation. This paper explores the ways in which these Austen-inspired texts are distorting Austen's original characters and identifies the traits of the New Darcy, the New Elizabeth, and the New Marriage for the twenty-first century.

⁶ Austenprose. <http://austenprose.wordpress.com/2008/07/11/new-jane-austen-website-janeaustenorg/>. Accessed 7 Aug 2009.

The New Mr. Darcy

In 1995, Colin Firth's Fitzwilliam Darcy jumped into the lake at Pemberley and landed in the daydreams of Austen fans. Firth, and his wet-shirt Darcy started an international outbreak of Darcymania. The airing of the *BBC* miniseries of *Pride and Prejudice* coincided with a resurgence of public interest in Austen's work. JASNA's membership doubled from 2,200 to 4,400 in 1995 alone without any additional advertising.⁷

Part of the success of the miniseries, besides the wet shirt, was that Darcy's character underwent what Linda Troost might call a "New Man" transformation. In her interview for *The Friendly Jane Austen*, Troost addresses the obvious differences between Austen's Darcy and the BBC Darcy: "The Austen films, which are cultivating a female audience, make Austen's men into New Men...The films of the 1990s, like the romance novels of the 1990s, give us the heroes we want in the 1990s, men who feel." And audiences for the BBC film are able to "feel" Darcy in part because of the fact that his role in the film has been magnified from his role in the novel. The miniseries director, Andrew Davies, provided ways to give Darcy extra screen time so that the audience sees him wrestling with his anger, desire, and frustration after Elizabeth's rejection of his proposal. Instead of staying primarily with Elizabeth's point of view, the miniseries constantly cuts to images of Darcy and we see him in ways we are never able to see him when he is confined by the pages of the novel. We watch him watch Elizabeth. We watch him write his letter of explanation to Elizabeth as well as when he is searching the muddy streets of London for Wickham and Lydia. Troost says that these "extra scenes" are a reflection of the changing tastes in romance novels. Troost

⁷ Tyler, Natalie. *The Friendly Jane Austen*. Interview with Elsa Solender. Pg 244.

says that, “Recent films develop the personalities of the men in new ways...

Interestingly, this change parallels the same development in contemporary romance fiction. Since the late 1980s romance heroes... have had their points of view included, and many have acquired a set of ideal qualities.” Troost explains, “Romance novel heroes now possess and express tender feeling, respect women, show great sensitivity and vulnerability, love small children and animals, and are generally nice and witty.”⁸

Darcy does not begin the film with “great sensitivity” or “tender feeling.” In fact, it is quite the opposite. He has closed off poses and is shot primarily in profile. It is not until after Elizabeth rejects his proposal that we see the New, vulnerable Darcy.⁹ We see his angst as he writes the letter. Cheryl L. Nixon describes the scene in “Balancing the Courtship Hero.” She writes, “The letter-writing scene ends with a disheveled Darcy washing his face and groaning, the implication being that he has been up all night composing his missive. He returns to his room and violently, even painfully, extinguishes his candle with his bare fingers.”¹⁰ Nixon refers to this scene, as one of the moments where the director is attempting to “flesh out” or “balance” the hero and prove to the audience that the hero is worthy of the heroine.¹¹ Austen heroes Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon are “balanced” in the 1995 film *Sense and Sensibility* by adding scenes and the handsome, yet unreliable Willoughby has the size of his role reduced.¹²

Firth’s open display of emotion as the plot develops allows the audience to see how Darcy feels as he falls in love with Elizabeth. Firth’s Darcy was the right Darcy at

⁸ Tyler, Natalie. *The Friendly Jane Austen*. Interview with Linda Troost. Pg. 258.

⁹ Nixon, Cheryl L. “Balancing the Courtship Hero.” *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1998. Pg. 22-43. Print.

¹⁰ Nixon, Cheryl L. “Balancing the Courtship Hero.” *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1998. Pg. 22-43. Print.

¹¹ Nixon, Cheryl L. “Balancing the Courtship Hero.” *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1998. Pg. 22-43. Print.

¹² Nixon, Cheryl L. “Balancing the Courtship Hero.” *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1998. Pg. 22-43. Print.

the right time and as a result, his embodiment of the character is firmly affixed in the minds of Austen lovers the world over. Firth's Darcy is arguably one of the first representations of a New Darcy.

The BBC miniseries is also crucial to the character development of the New Darcy because Darcy becomes the subject of the female gaze. In her article "Mr. Darcy's Body: Privileging the Female Gaze," Lisa Hopkins notes the great efforts of the director to film Darcy in frames that would make him the subject of the female gaze whereas most films make females the subject of the male gaze. Additionally, showing Darcy in active pursuits like fencing and playing billiards demonstrates to the modern audience that gentleman did more than just dance, pose in drawing rooms and shoot wildlife.¹³

Hopkins' theorizes that the BBC Darcy, who showed the audience his feelings, might have influenced Janet Aylmer's 1996 novel *Darcy's Story*. *Darcy's Story* was the first spin off of *Pride and Prejudice* that retold the story from Darcy's point of view. Aylmer's novel is just the beginning of a long line of Austen hero point-of-view spin-off novels. Hopkins also insinuates that it is Andrew Davies crafted use of Mr. Darcy, which effectively transforms *Pride and Prejudice* into Darcy's story for the first time.¹⁴

Helen Fielding was inspired by the BBC miniseries to use the *Pride and Prejudice* storyline in her novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The main character, Bridget, is obsessed with the wet-shirt Darcy and she watches the miniseries on TV. Bridget eventually finds love with her own Mr. Darcy and in the film adaptation of Fielding's book, the hero, Mark Darcy is portrayed by Colin Firth. Fielding's novel about a modern

¹³ Hopkins, Lisa. "Mr. Darcy's Body: Privileging the Female Gaze." *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1998. Pg.111-121. Print

¹⁴ Hopkins, Lisa. "Mr. Darcy's Body: Privileging the Female Gaze." *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1998. Pg.111-121. Print

woman experiencing a *Pride and Prejudice*-like story and ending up with Mr. Darcy has no doubt inspired several novels in the same vein. In her article, “Jane Austen and Popular Culture,” Judy Simmons explains the escalating and interrelated nature of Austen-inspired works:

Working Title’s 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* responds directly to the BBC serial. Matthew McFayden’s performance recalls the wet-shirted Darcy, emerging from the lake at Pemberley, itself a calculated contrast to Laurence Olivier’s previously definitive portrayal in the 1940 movie...In casting off the impact of the 1995 adaptation, it underscores the absorption of those images into the collective cultural imagination...The ingenious casting of Colin Firth as Darcy in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is a deliberate allusion to Firth’s casting in the BBC serial. The palimpsestic nature of these products continue to resonate for the practiced Austen reader, aware of eighteenth-century literary conventions, the nuances of the original text, and the quirks of cinema and critical histories.¹⁵

Bridget Jones’s *Diary* transports *Pride and Prejudice* to modern-day London. The hero is still named Mr. Darcy, but he has a few ideal qualities that place him in the category of the New Darcy. First, his large income is derived from his skills as “top-notch human rights barrister” instead of from a family fortune. His success is directly relational to his intelligence and skill as a litigator (9). Additionally, Mark is attracted to Bridget even though she feels that she has many flaws. He tells Bridget what most modern women would love to hear, that he “likes” her “just the way” she is.

The New Darcy in the *Confession of Fitzwilliam Darcy* is reminiscent of Firth’s BBC Darcy, in the fact that this Darcy is open with his emotions, and potentially more sensitive than Austen’s Darcy. *Confession* is told from Mr. Darcy’s point of view and allows him to give his version of *Pride and Prejudice* and explain the ideology behind some of his behavior. Though it is never clear throughout the novel just to whom Darcy

¹⁵ Simmons, Judy. “Jane Austen and Popular Culture.” *A Companion to Jane Austen*. Ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

is “confessing,” he gives the reader his explanation for why he called Elizabeth “tolerable” upon meeting her. According to Street’s “New” Darcy, he believes that he’s overheard Elizabeth discussing his finances and eligibility so in order to exact a small revenge, he makes purposely mean comments that he knows she will overhear. Darcy also confesses, “Let her, I thought savagely, find out what it was like to be obliged to overhear strangers discussing your person and situation. Knowing she would hear, I turned to Bingley expressing the opinion that she was tolerable” (11). Street’s Darcy attempts to provide an excuse for the poor behavior Austen’s Darcy exhibits when he first meets Elizabeth. In this scenario, Darcy always thinks Elizabeth is attractive, but he lies in order to make her regret a comment he believes she made. He even blames her for provoking him to make the comment saying, “I recalled the whole of that evening; my disgust of her mother; the vulgar behavior of her younger sisters; the way she herself had somehow drawn me into noticing her far more than I wished” (11). In retelling his actions, Darcy comments that he had “thought savagely” and in that manner, expresses regret for his actions. He also compliments Elizabeth by implying that he can not keep himself from looking at her. Certainly, Street’s New Darcy is meant to be more sympathetic than Austen’s original.

Seth Graham-Smith’s monster-infused novel, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, casts Mr. Darcy as a tough-as-nails zombie-slayer who is “proficient with both swords and musket” and “slaughtered more than a thousand unmentionables since the fall of Cambridge” (12). Graham-Smith’s England is overrun with zombies, or unmentionables, which arise from the graveyards to feast on the living. Instead of fighting enemy troops, the main task of soldiers like Mr. Denny and Wickham is to dig up and burn corpses before they catch the zombie plague. It is England’s well-preserved

history that makes it prone to such an attack. There is not a zombie outbreak in the United States or Australia. Metaphorically, remnants of England's past societies are rising up and interfering with the future of the living. In order to combat this considerable challenge, Graham-Smithe must create a New Darcy. This New Darcy is not just a handsome and rich gentleman, he is also a skilled fighter in a zombie-ridden land. He is a man of action. When money is ineffective in changing Wickham's mind about marrying Lydia, Darcy responds with his warrior skills and physically forces Wickham into marriage. Rich, handsome, and in possession of ninja skills, Graham-Smithe modifies Austen's Darcy in order to make an ideal Darcy for the world of his novel.

Mr. Darcy has become a commodity for female consumption through both visual and textual means. Textually, he is available for purchase and reading pleasure in *Pride and Prejudice* as well as a bookcase-full of spin off novels. On the website "Jane Austen Today," one blogger, Christina, is attempting to read all the *Pride and Prejudice* sequels.¹⁶ Her list started with forty-one books, but members of the online community added twelve other titles that were missing from the list. Apparently, Mr. Darcy is excellent at selling books. Of the sixty-three titles, twenty-five have the word "Darcy" in the title. Additionally, Mr. Darcy's property, Pemberley is also good at selling books. "Pemberley" is in ten of the titles. Many of the other titles advertise themselves to readers by using the "blank" and "blank" sequence with alliterating first letters. Examples are *Affinity and Affection*, *Vanity and Vexation*, and *Virtue and Vanity*.

Visually, he can be rented or purchased in video or DVD form as well as in

¹⁶ See appendix, Christina's *Pride and Prejudice* Sequel List : Jane Austen Today.

<http://janitesonthejames.blogspot.com>. Accessed 13 Aug 2009.

pictures, key chains, cross-stitches, tattoos, and any other type of surface one can image. One of the most popular items at the Jane Austen Centre is a Mr. Darcy coffee mug with a cartoon rendering of Colin Firth's Darcy.¹⁷ The coffee mug allows the Austen fan to savor the smoldering expression of her favorite fictional hero while enjoying her morning cup of Joe. Austen fans can effectively buy their own representation of Mr. Darcy, depending on how much they are willing to spend. The cheapest Darcy items in the Jane Austen Centre are postcards and key chains, but pricier items such as "I love Darcy" jewelry are also available.

There are many faces to Mr. Darcy, but by far, the most popular image is that of Colin Firth's Darcy. Almost all of the Mr. Darcy items available at the Jane Austen Centre and Chawton House use Colin Firth's image. There are only a few specialty items featuring the other adaptation Darcys. Laurence Olivier played Darcy in the 1940 film and Mathew McFayden performed the role in the 2005 production opposite Keira Knightley. He is the second-most popular Darcy and there is currently a debate over who is the "hotter" Mr. Darcy, Firth or McFayden, on the Facebook group "I Refuse to Settle for Anything Less than Mr. Darcy." With over 15,000 members, the debate could really heat up.¹⁸

Firth's portrayal was probably the first depiction of Mr. Darcy that many *Pride and Prejudice* fans ever saw because of the timing of the film. The Laurence Olivier film was fifty-five years old when Firth's production was filmed and Firth was already established as "THE Darcy" when the 2005 film hit theaters. Some viewers will be imprinted with the first "Darcy" they see. Sarah McGinnis recalls the effects of having her first encounter with *Pride and Prejudice* on a children's show called *Wishbone*. "I

¹⁷ Appendix, Darcy and Jane Merchandise

¹⁸ Facebook.com <<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2212524989>>. Accessed 14 Aug 2009.

read the book in high school and my friends were all thinking about Colin Firth, but I just kept thinking of a Jack Russell Terrier in a blue waistcoat.”

By purchasing Darcy items, the buyer makes a statement about herself. For example, if a woman owns an “I heart Darcy” eco-bag, she is wordlessly communicating to anyone who sees the bag that she loves Mr. Darcy, is environmentally friendly, and is in possession of a good sense of humor.¹⁹ She is also communicating her level of culture. Not all audiences know who Mr. Darcy is or even that he is a fictional creation of Jane Austen. If another person compliments the woman on her bag, then the two would know that they share a similar interest and are part of the same esoteric group. The advent of “Darcy” and “Jane” merchandise allows fans to take their *Pride and Prejudice* obsession out of their private lives and into the public sphere.

After two hundred years, we must ask ourselves why are we still fixated on Mr. Darcy? What is it about his character that we are drawn back to over and over again? Why is he still the quintessential romantic hero? Austen’s Darcy is rich, handsome, and owns a beautiful property. He accepts Elizabeth’s rebuke and becomes a better man. He saves the heroine’s family from ruin even after she rejects his marriage proposal. Darcy falls in love with a woman who lacks fortune and family connections because of her wit and lively disposition. He is the Prince Charming of Regency England and he is smart enough to choose a Cinderella like Elizabeth instead of an evil stepsister like Caroline Bingley. We’re attracted to him because of his material goods and surface features, but mostly we love him for loving Elizabeth. We can imagine ourselves as Elizabeth because she is like so many of us. Her family doesn’t have a lot of extra money, she is not the most beautiful woman in the shire, and her sharp tongue can

¹⁹ Appendix, Darcy and Jane Merchandise

sometimes get her into trouble. If Elizabeth can have a Darcy, we want one too.

Chapter Two: The New Elizabeth

While introducing her lecture at the JASNA Jane Austen Festival in Louisville, Margaret Sullivan, author of *The Jane Austen Handbook* and blogger for the website Austenblog asked the audience, “Who doesn’t want to be Elizabeth Bennet? She gets the guy in the wet shirt.” Then with a smile and mock chagrin she corrected herself, “Oops...I mean the rich guy with the big house.”

Sullivan may only have intended to warm up her audience with a joke, but her comment touches on one of the developing trends of Austen’s heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*. Just as a New Darcy is evolving in the global marketplace, the New Elizabeth is constantly undergoing reconstruction. Readers and viewers of *Pride and Prejudice* related-material have an increasingly complicated relationship with Elizabeth Bennet. Elizabeth’s character appears to be adapting in two divergent directions. In the first, she is a witty goddess who should be emulated by the reader in order to obtain a Mr. Darcy-like man for herself. Elizabeth, like Mr. Darcy, has been enhanced by qualities that are assumed to be favorable to the targeted audience of the sequel novel. Finally, the character is competition with modern women and can be replaced by the lucky heroines of recent novels. It is not that the reader wants to “be” Elizabeth, so much as the reader wants what Elizabeth “has,” namely, Mr. Darcy, a loving relationship, wealth, and Pemberley. This chapter will explore the New Elizabeth in popular texts by comparing them to Austen’s original and theorize about the future of Elizabeth’s character.

There’s something special about Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet. At first, Austen downplays her appeal. She is only moderately accomplished and can play the piano only a little. She is described as “not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-

humored as Lydia” (2). She is a gentleman’s daughter, but Darcy’s aunt, Lady Catherine, makes it clear that she considers Elizabeth to be “A young woman without family, connections, or fortune” (341). Despite these failings, her father notes that “Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters” (3). And it is this quickness of wit and tongue, as well as a pair of “fine eyes” that allow Elizabeth, unwittingly, to win Mr. Darcy.

In Mary Street’s *The Confession of Fitzwilliam Darcy*, Darcy describes Elizabeth with numerous words and qualities that go beyond the vocabulary of affection Austen’s Darcy used to describe Elizabeth. Street’s Darcy calls Elizabeth, “His angel,” “His Love,” and “The enchanter of his heart.” There is a whole market of books dedicated to teaching modern women how to behave like Elizabeth Bennet including titles like *Miss Elizabeth Bennet’s Guide to Manners* and *Elizabeth’s Guide to Life*.

In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Graham-Smith gives Elizabeth the added dimension of being a zombie-slaying warrior. As such, Elizabeth’s words and actions are all colored by the aggressive element that is added to her character. For example, Elizabeth overhears Mr. Darcy refer to her looks as “tolerable, but not tolerable enough to tempt me” (13). Instead of making light of the insult the same way that Austen’s Elizabeth does, Graham-Smith’s Elizabeth responds like a warrior who has had her honor insulted. She plans a surprise attack on Mr. Darcy. Graham-Smith writes, “As Mr. Darcy walked off, Elizabeth felt her blood turn cold. She had never in her life been so insulted. The warrior code demanded she avenge her honour. Elizabeth reached down to her ankle...there, her hand met the dagger concealed beneath her dress. She meant to follow this proud Mr. Darcy outside and open his throat.” (14). Elizabeth is prevented from exacting revenge on Mr. Darcy because the ball is interrupted by a

horde of zombies. However, the degree of difference in her reaction from Austen's Elizabeth works to show the extent of the liberties modern authors are taking with Austen's characters. Graham-Smithe makes Elizabeth much more independent and rebellious than the original. Her violent reaction reflects not the response of a true Regency woman, but rather the expectations of the readership audience that purchased *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* in part for the New Elizabeth such a venture would promise. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is on the extreme side of the *Pride and Prejudice* knockoff genre, but it does effectively illustrate the complete lack of regulation associated with modern spins on Austen's work.

Graham-Smithe gave Elizabeth a new characteristic, zombie-slaying, but he made sure to give her heightened abilities. She is not just a warrior, she is the best female warrior in all of England, just as Mr. Darcy is the best male warrior. In making Elizabeth a warrior on equal footing, he has decreased the discrepancy between Elizabeth and Darcy's social value. While she may still lack fortune and connections, she is a talented warrior and that aspect of her character makes her more attractive to Mr. Darcy and his lifestyle and is understandable to the reader. Though the two books are very different, *Confession of Fitzwilliam Darcy* works in a similar manner. Mr. Darcy doesn't just love Austen's Elizabeth, he loves the perfect Elizabeth with heightened good qualities that Street has crafted. In this sense, both novels have worked to provide more of an explanation for why Mr. Darcy loves Elizabeth and chipped away at the inequality surrounding their union. While this softening of flaws and amplification of desirable qualities help strengthen the aura of desirability surrounding Elizabeth Bennet, it also takes away from the attractiveness of Austen's original love story. One of the reasons readers keep coming back to *Pride and Prejudice* is the appeal of two socially

unequal partners disregarding the cold norms of their society and following their hearts. If Elizabeth is glamorized to the point that she is absolutely perfect and beautiful, then Darcy's love for her is less meaningful. It is Elizabeth's flaws that help create her appeal to readers and to Mr. Darcy.

Conversely, books like *Being Elizabeth Bennet* and *Bridget Jones's Diary* seek to replace Austen's Elizabeth with a more flawed version of the New Elizabeth, essentially by making her a modern woman. Both novels encourage the reader to identify with the heroine and create a scenario in which a modern woman has the relationship with Mr. Darcy throughout the novel.

Being Elizabeth Bennet: Create Your Own Jane Austen Adventure is unique in the fact that it allows readers to interact with the novel and change the plot based upon the reader's answer. Emma Campbell Webster uses the third person and addresses the reader as "You" and informs the reader that you are "christened Elizabeth Bennet" and that your mission "is to marry both prudently and for love, eluding undesirable suitors and avoiding family scandals which would almost certainly ruin any hope of a financially advantageous marriage for you or any of your sisters" (ix). The novel follows the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* and You must answer trivia questions correctly in order to stay in the correct Austen book. If You should answer a question incorrectly, You may be directed to a page number that will leave You in another of Austen's novels such as *Emma* or *Sense and Sensibility*. In order to "win" the game and marry Mr. Darcy, You, Elizabeth Bennet, must make correct and socially responsible decisions or risk ending up with Wickham or Frank Churchill or even Mr. Collins. This version of the New Elizabeth is directly asking the reader to image herself as Elizabeth Bennet. For all intents and purposes, Webster's Elizabeth Bennet is a modern reader and even though

the reader might know what Austen's Bennet would do in the described circumstances, she is in charge of Elizabeth's, and therefore, her own, literary destiny. You, the modern reader, essentially replaces Austen's Elizabeth and has the ability to "win" the dream man, Mr. Darcy, based upon her choices. There is also the possibility that You, Elizabeth, can chose to turn down Mr. Darcy's second proposal and decide to write instead. In such a scenario, the implication is that You has refused the persona of Elizabeth Bennet and embraced the role of Jane Austen instead. If that were the case, Jane Austen, and not Elizabeth Bennet would become the ideal. Regardless of the modern reader's final decision, *Being Elizabeth Bennet*, aggressively works to insert the modern readers into the world of Jane Austen and replace the traditional heroine, Elizabeth, with themselves.

Bridget Jones's Diary echoes the *Pride and Prejudice* storyline, but replaces Austen's Elizabeth with a modern-day London singleton. Bridget Jones is thirty-something who thinks she would have her life together if she could stop smoking, stop drinking, lose ten pounds, and learn to program the VCR. Whereas some recent *Pride and Prejudice* novels have created a paragon out of Elizabeth, *Bridget Jones's Diary* succeeds in knocking Elizabeth off the metaphorical pedestal and installing a relatable, heavily-flawed modern woman in her place.

Elizabeth appears to be less marketable than both her fictional husband and her author. As discussed in "The New Darcy" chapter, Mr. Darcy and Jane Austen items sell very well. However, Elizabeth-only items are both less numerous and less expensive than Darcy and Austen products. At the Jane Austen Centre, one can purchase sixteen Darcy-only items ranging in price from L .75 postcards to L95 "I love Darcy" gold necklaces. The Centre offers thirty-two Jane-only items ranging in price from L.75

postcards to L350 jewelry. The Centre offers only two Elizabeth-only products, a postcard and a box of “Lizzie Bennet’s Gift Soap.” The Jane Austen Centre is not alone in its lack of Elizabeth Bennet merchandise. One could find similar product ratios at both Chawton House Museum and the Louisville Jane Austen Festival.²⁰

Elizabeth is the heroine of one of the most beloved novels of all time, so why isn’t she more popular?

As silly as it may sound, it may be that current audiences of *Pride and Prejudice* are jealous of her. Consumers move straight past her and on to Mr. Darcy. In modern novels like *Lost in Austen*, *Seducing Mr. Darcy*, and *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict*, the Elizabeth character is physically replaced by a modern woman who goes back in time and it is she, not Elizabeth, who romances the nineteenth century Mr. Darcy. In these scenarios, it is never the Mr. Darcy character who is replaced. It is always Elizabeth. Darcy moves far ahead of Elizabeth in popularity because there isn’t a strong competing, “We Love Elizabeth Community.” Like Darcy, Elizabeth has facebook groups, but there are only a combined forty members in the “I Love Elizabeth Bennet” and “I Admire Elizabeth Bennet” groups. There are another combined fifty members in groups that say “I Wish I Were Elizabeth Bennet.”²¹ Though similar, the two types of groups clearly have different desires. The first, smaller group, wants to emulate Elizabeth. The members of the second group wish they were living Elizabeth’s fictional life.

Maybe the New Elizabeth won’t be a “New Elizabeth” at all. Maybe the New Elizabeth will be us, the consumer, looking for more ways to insert ourselves into *Pride and Prejudice*. Books like *Being Elizabeth Bennet* do an incredible job of drawing the

²⁰ Prices based on Jane Austen Centre Website and observations I made on site in Bath, Chawton, and Louisville.

²¹ Facebook.com <<http://www.facebook.com/search/?q=Elizabeth+bennet&init=quick>>. Accessed 14 Aug 2009.

reader into Elizabeth's life. As the New Mr. Darcy continues to morph into more extreme versions of Austen's original, his presence and popularity threaten to overshadow Elizabeth completely.

The New Happily, Ever After

“Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters”

--*Pride and Prejudice*, Chapter 61

This sly, sideways sentence is all the information Austen gives her readers regarding the nuptials of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. The sentence downplays Elizabeth and Jane's roles as brides and highlights the importance of the marriages to their family, especially their mother, Mrs. Bennet. The final chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* is dedicated to summing up the effects of the marriages on family relations instead of concentrating on the new couples.

The institution of marriage is arguably the third main character in *Pride and Prejudice*. From the famous first line readers know that the novel will be about marriage and that “it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” (1). Besides having marriage as a central theme, the novel also serves as a lens into the marriages of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins, Lydia Bennet and Mr. Wickham, Jane and Bingley, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, and Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Readers quickly identify several types of marriages featured in the novel. Even though she does not love him, Charlotte Lucas marries Mr. Collins because he has connections and a home. Charlotte tells Elizabeth, “I am not a romantic...I ask only for a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast” (125). As a twenty-seven-year-old woman of average temperament and beauty living in the country, Charlotte did not have many prospects or reason to expect another offer. Mr. Collins marries Charlotte

because his attentions to the Bennet sisters are rebuffed and Lady Catherine suggests that he marry. Both Mr. Collins and Charlotte settle for each other because they don't have the time or inclination to wait for someone better. If Charlotte didn't marry anyone she would have to live at home the rest of her life and then live off her siblings as a "poor relation" once her parents died. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage is unbalanced. Mrs. Bennet is socially overactive and trying too aggressively to get her daughters married. She pushes Mr. Bennet into calling on Mr. Bingley and alarms Mr. Darcy by saying that Jane's connection to Mr. Bingley will throw the other Bennet girls into the paths of rich men. For his part, Mr. Bennet is unsympathetic to his wife's nerves and completely ineffectual when Wickham and Lydia elope. Lydia and Wickham's marriage is based on imprudent lust. Wickham never intended to marry Lydia and without Mr. Darcy's interference they would not have money to live on. Lydia is effectively punished for her impropriety by being attached to Wickham in what will be, we assume, an unhappy marriage. It is not until Gardiners are introduced that Austen presents a happy, functional example of marriage. The Gardiners are responsible, in part, for Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage. And it is in fact, Elizabeth and Darcy's influence over Jane and Bingley, respectively, that results in their eventual union. Essentially, the prudent, responsible characters are rewarded with marriages that are both financially and emotionally rewarding. This reading of marriage fits within Tyler's "Gentle Jane" school of criticism.²²

Austen has been criticized for large role she gives marriage in her novels. However, her focus on marriage accurately reflects the social conditions of upper middle class Regency England. Marriage was the most important event in any young woman's

²² Tyler, Natalie. *The Friendly Jane Austen*. Pg 11.

life. Marriage contracts were like business arrangements between the young ladies' fathers and their future husband.²³

Unfortunately, many young women were not allowed to decide whom they married. Tyler's school of Subversive critics would note that all of Austen's heroines chose to marry the hero, and reject unsuitable matches, even against family pressure.²⁴ During Austen's time, England functioned under the "law of coverture" wherein the woman was legally absorbed by her husband upon her marriage. The term in French, *femme couverte*, translates to "covered woman." As far as the law was concerned, the couple became one person, and that person was the man. The woman legally ceased to exist. She could not access her money unless specific arrangements were made in her marriage contract. If she had property, it became his property; if she had money, it became his money.²⁵ In *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia worries that Wickham will wed an heiress because he needs money and Wickham attempts to elope with Georgiana Darcy in order to obtain her £30,000. Mr. Bennet erroneously believes that Lydia will not interest any of the soldiers because she is "too poor."

Being married to a suitable spouse was important because once a woman married, she was effectively trapped in her situation. Divorce was almost unheard of except in the case of extreme circumstances such as impotency, incest, and sodomy. Also, divorces, as infrequently as they did occur, were very expensive, so the lower classes were prevented from legally separating from unwanted spouses.²⁶ A husband in rural England could effectively divorce his wife by selling her at auction to the highest bidder.²⁷ By law, Mr. Rochester was allowed to imprison his wife, Bertha Mason, in

²³ Pool, Daniel. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*. Pg. 181.

²⁴ Tyler, Natalie. *The Friendly Jane Austen*. Pg 13.

²⁵ Pool, Daniel. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*. Pg. 127.

²⁶ Pool, Daniel. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*, pg. 190.

²⁷ According to Pool in *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*, as many as 380 couples were divorced in

Jane Eyre, because she was mentally ill.

Austen chose to end the stories of her heroines almost immediately after their weddings to the heroes. It is here that many *Pride and Prejudice* sequels pick up Austen's thread and weave their own versions of the rest of Darcy and Elizabeth's life together. There is also a trend in books that re-enact *Pride and Prejudice* scene by scene to add additional moments of affection between the protagonists, often following the pair through their first kiss, wedding night, or even the birth of a child. By ending *Pride and Prejudice* as she did, Austen allowed her readers' to imagine their own continuations to the novel. Perhaps Austen's lack of detail is the driving force behind the frequency of *Pride and Prejudice* sequels. Audiences need the reassurance that Darcy and Elizabeth, do in fact end up happily, ever after.

Modern audiences might wonder why Austen didn't include more details about Elizabeth and Darcy's married life at the end of *Pride and Prejudice*. Charlotte Bronte, writing only a generation after Austen said that Austen "ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him with nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her."²⁸ Maybe it was not a lack of passion, but a sense of propriety. Probably the best explanation would be that such writing would be considered inappropriate. Austen was already dangerously close to impropriety with her career as a writer. She hid her writing from everyone except family and attributed her first works to "A Lady."²⁹ Physical signs of affection, in social situations were considered highly inappropriate. A couple with the social consequence of Elizabeth and Darcy might not have even held hands before their marriage. Additionally, the couple would not kiss when the minister announced that they

this fashion. In some cases the husband even put a halter around his wives' shoulders so that he could lead her, like cattle, to the auction block.

²⁸ Jane Austen Quote of the Day. http://janeaustenquotes.typepad.com/jane_austen_quotes/2007/08/bronte-on-auste.html>. Accessed 8 Aug 2009.

²⁹ Laski, Marghanita. *Jane Austen and Her World*. Pg. 76.

were man and wife. Kissing in public, especially in a house of worship like a church, would have been far outside the bounds of acceptable social behavior.³⁰

Because Austen did not provide the details about Darcy and Elizabeth's first kiss, many *Pride and Prejudice* sequel writers feel compelled to craft that scene. After Elizabeth accepts Darcy's second proposal in *The Confession of Fitzwilliam Darcy*, Darcy, in his excitement and nervousness, bumbles the kiss and accidentally connects with Elizabeth's chin instead of her lips. He feels embarrassed, but Elizabeth laughs off the situation and tells him, "You will never kiss really well, Mr. Darcy, unless you practice more" (263). Then the lovers run off, presumably intending to continue practicing. The novel ends with this image instead of following through with the wedding as Austen does in the original. For readers of *Confession*, this ending, though sugary sweet, might just satisfy their desire to see Elizabeth and Darcy happily settled.

The Joe Wright film version of *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) features an additional scene showing the Darcys in what viewers perceive to be wedded bliss. Darcy and Elizabeth are in a state of Regency undress, and the implication to audiences is that the couple is happily wedded and bedded. While Austen purists objected to the scene, its inclusion effectively answers the call for more physical affection between the couple.

Instead of ending with a marriage, Helen Fielding ends *Bridget Jones's Diary* with Bridget and Mr. Darcy consummating their relationship. Mark Darcy, international barrister extraordinaire, succeeds in saving Bridget's mother from prosecution (the Lydia storyline) for her part in a swindling scam with her lover. Darcy and Bridget leave the chaos of her home and family, and by leaving, effectively start their own family at a swanky hotel. They have sex and Bridget counts her year as a success partly because

³⁰ Pool, Daniel. *What Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*. Pg 187.

of her new boyfriend. Even though the couple is not married, they are prudent, in love, and happy.

In fact, the institution of marriage is not treated at all favorably in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. As opposed to the sixty plus uses of the word "marriage" in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* only musters a paltry six.³¹ Additionally, all six references are used in a negative context. For example, at one point Bridget asks if it is one in three or one in two marriages that end in divorce.

Because *Bridget Jones's Diary* updated everything else from *Pride and Prejudice* it only makes sense that it would update the importance of marriage to the novel's target readership. It is more likely for a modern reader that Bridget, a thirty-something London singleton, would go to bed with her dream man before she married him. Bridget faces no scorn or public scrutiny for her behavior as she would have in Regency England. Lydia Bennet is punished for eloping with Wickham by being forced to marry him. In *Jane Austen and Crime*, Susannah Fullerton writes, "Sexual immorality and the deliberate flouting of social rules are no longer funny and characters can no longer escape unpunished for such behavior."³² While Mr. Darcy's wealth adds to his attractive qualities, Bridget does not *need* to marry him. She can make her own money and provide for herself, thus eliminating her dependency on male connections. Thus, *Bridget Jones's Diary* shows that the *Pride and Prejudice* story, and more importantly, the *Pride and Prejudice* heroine can still end happily, even without marriage.

Pride and Prejudice has inspired over sixty imitation versions of the novel, but one must wonder if the imitations have had any affect on Austen's novels. Some of the racier *Pride and Prejudice* sequels might be affecting how Austen is being marketed and

³¹ Numbers obtained by using the "search" option in Amazon.com's Look Inside feature.

³² Fullerton, Susannah. *Jane Austen and Crime*. Pg. 95

interpreted. Though it is by no means conclusive, it is interesting to note that the cover art for one of the most popular, and most sexually explicit *Pride and Prejudice* sequels, Linda Berdoll's *Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife* is the same as Penguin's Austen collection. Was it merely an oversight on Penguin's part or could the company be trying to capitalize on reader's recognition of the collection between the cover of Berdoll's book and their new edition of *Austen's Collected Novels*. Berdoll's book was published by Sourcebooks in 2004 and between her two *Pride and Prejudice* sequels (one is a sequel of her sequel) she has over 250,000 books in print.³³ The Penguin collection in question was printed in 2006 and then again in 2008, with plenty of time for the employees in the marketing department to learn that they were sharing their cover art with an erotic *Pride and Prejudice* sequel.

Even if readers did not connect the Penguin volume with Berdoll's book, the cover art itself violates the propriety of Austen's novels and Regency England. The image is of a tall, dark man in the shadows grabbing the bare shoulders of the woman in front of him and bending her back for a passionate kiss. There is no kissing in Austen's novels. The cover effectively insinuates that Austen's novels are far more physically passionate than they are in actuality.

In her article "The Pitfalls of Postmodern Nostalgia," Amanda Collins observes a similar marketing technique for video covers for the film *Persuasion* (1995). Collins found that the cover for the videocassette for sale in the store featured an image of Anne and Captain Wentworth poised for a kiss outside of Anne's childhood home, Kellynch, a scene that never occurs in the film. The cover of the videocassette in the rental store featured a couple, not the actual actors in the film, locked in a passionate

³³ Number is taken from Berdoll's website, www.lindaberdoll.us/about.htm, and accurate as of Aug 2009

embrace. Collins writes:

The significance of these boxes...is not in the fact that they obscure the “real,” but in the fact that they have become another type of “real”: the hyperreal. They are the models, the copies of something that does not exist. There is no scene in the film that these pictures recreate. They are not *re-creations* but *creations*. Thus, we have two different scenes on these boxes, neither of which occurs anywhere but on those boxes, yet they are supposed to be representations of what occurs in the film. But unlike a representation, which means “to present again,” these boxes do not present something *again*: they present it for the first time. They are a new presentation disguised as re-presentation.³⁴

Like the hyperreal videocassette boxes, the cover art on the Austen collection and the erotic nature of many of the *Pride and Prejudice* sequels creates a false impression of what will occur in Austen’s novels. While it is possible that Penguin’s marketing team did not consider the implications created by their cover choice, it is much more likely that the designers were hoping to capitalize on the sensuality of the image and its coincidence with the recent influx of sexually explicit *Pride and Prejudice* sequels. Another possibility is that the marketers are simply reacting to the adage that “sex sells.” In this instance, it seems that sex is selling the New Elizabeth and New Darcy, marriage optional.

Conclusion

“She turned her head to expose her throat as her senses were consumed by him,

³⁴ Collins, Amanda. “The Pitfalls of Postmodern Nostalgia.” *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1998. Pg.79-89. Print.

mesmerized by his breathing and hypnotic beating of his heart.”

--excerpt from *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* chapter 4³⁵

Blame it on *Twilight*.

Over the course of the next year, Austen is going to undergo yet another transformation. In response to the popularity of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, a whole slew of Austen-monster stories are on their way. The Quirk Books follow-up to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*. Besides zombies and sea monsters, Jane Austen's world is going to be invaded by the Predator monster and a gaggle of vampire Darcys. There are at least five vampire-infused versions of *Pride and Prejudice* in production. Sir Elton John is producing *Pride and Predator*, a film he calls the first Austen movie men will want to take their girlfriends to see.³⁶

Many Janeites are wondering what's next? Wickham the Werewolf?

These new versions of *Pride and Prejudice* are undeniably altering the way popular culture views Jane Austen and the characters of Elizabeth and Darcy. The New Darcy is romanticized by his audience and given desirable qualities. He is also given a larger role in both the films and the new imitation novels than he had in Austen's original novel. His added screen and page time can overpower the New Elizabeth. She is either given an excess of attractive qualities or replaced by a substitute heroine. Austen's original heroine, a complicated creature, gets lost between the two types of New Elizabeths.

A number of Austen purists hate the direction in which Austen continuations and

³⁵ Grange, Amanda. *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*. Sourcebooks: Chicago, 2009.

³⁶ "Pride and Predator." < <http://popwatch.ew.com/2009/02/17/elton-john-prid/> > Accessed 7 Aug 2009.

retellings are taking Darcy and Elizabeth. The argument can be made that the more the dominant culture is continually bombarded with distorted caricatures of Austen's work, the further the character's public image will drift from the original character. The more popular the characters become, the less exclusive liking Jane Austen will become. Janeites will lose some of their cachet and Austen will lose some of her high-art reputation.

Other fans are more generous. They see any type of interest in Austen as positive and beneficial. They hope that reading sequels and watching movies might encourage the broader audience to get interested in the "real" Austen's work. A large audience means that there will continue to be an influx of Austen-related materials into that market. A win-win situation for laid-back Janeities along for an entertaining ride.

As we observe the changing qualities of Austen's characters, we are able to map ourselves on an ethnographic spectrum. By looking at how we modify Elizabeth and Darcy, we can see the values and traits that our society finds desirable. The new vampire-Darcy phenomenon echoes back to Troost's quote about the New Man. Just as Darcy changed to reflect a more sensitive, and thus desirable leading man, Darcy is again changing to embody the current vogue. In this case, it is a brooding, mysterious vampire.

In comparing the aspects of *Bridget Jones's Diary* to *Pride and Prejudice* we can see who we were, where we've been, and where we are now. The "Pride and Monsters" trend will only continue as long as there is a lucrative market. Eventually, the novelty will wear off and *Pride and Prejudice* will be taken to a new frontier. Ultimately, the consumer is the authority on how divergent New Darcys and New Elizabeths will become. When reconstructed characters become too distorted from the original, buyers

will stop purchasing those products. At which time, writers and consumers will return to the original *Pride and Prejudice*. Christina from the *Pride and Prejudice* sequel novel challenge writes in her blog, “I like reading *Pride & Prejudice* sequels, sometimes even the bad ones just because they remind me of how much I love Austen’s original.”³⁷ Within the text of *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy and Elizabeth are immutable and when this world is too busy, too crowded, too coarse and unrefined, Austen’s elegant love story is only a few pages away.

Austen’s ability to simultaneously adapt and maintain universal appeal is what keeps her books relevant and popular even today. Vampires, zombies, Bridget Jones, and New Darcys will come and go, but as long as readers enjoy happy endings and witty observations, we will have Jane Austen and *Pride and Prejudice*.

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³⁷ Jane Austen Today. <http://janitesonthejames.blogspot.com>. Accessed 13 Aug 2009.

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Austen in Action



Clothes inspired by BBC production



Picnic in the Regency Style



Male employee in Regency Dress at

JAC



JASNA Ball in Louisville, KY



Austen fan with ceramic Jane at JAC

Mr. Darcy and Jane Austen for Sale



Darcy Portrait



Quotation on Opposite Side

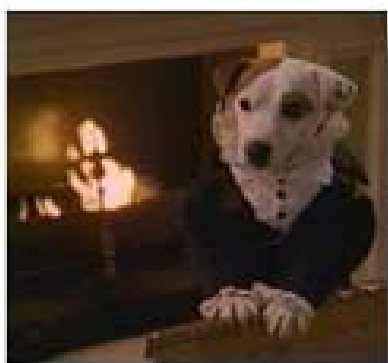


The Many Faces of Mr. Darcy

Colin Firth, 1995 BBC miniseries



Matthew McFayden, 2005 Joe Wright Film

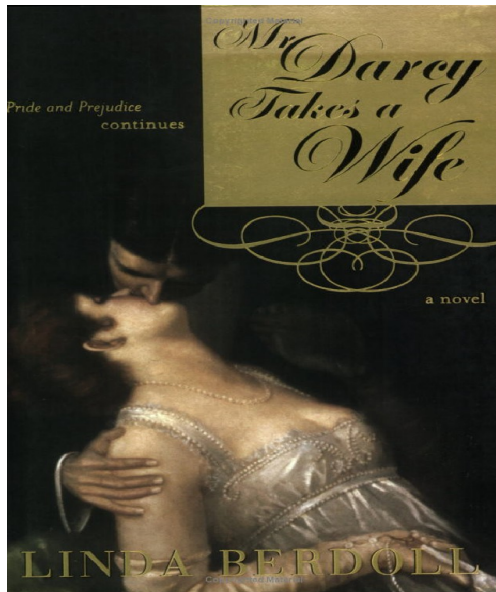


Wishbone, 1999

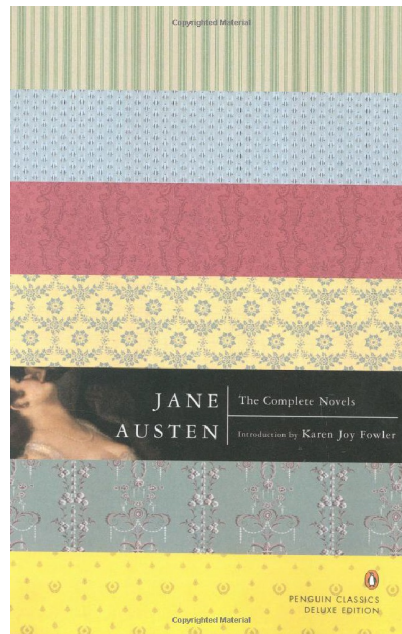


Laurence Olivier, 1940

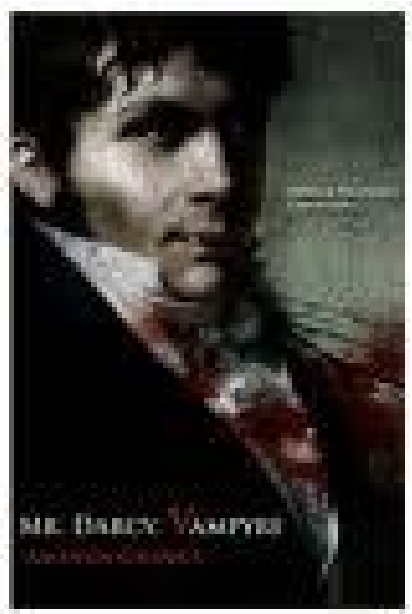
Controversial Book Covers



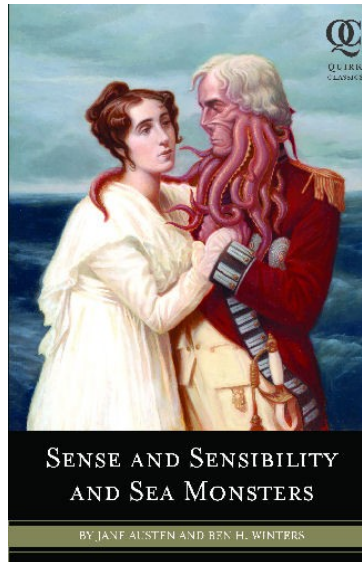
Cover of a popular P&P sequel (2004)



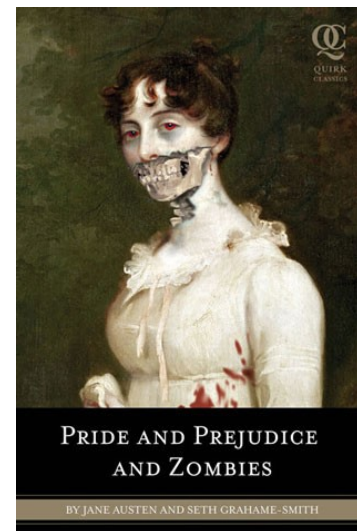
Cover of Penguin Collected Works Anthology (2006, 2008)



Mr. Darcy, Vampire (2009)



Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters (2009)



Pride and Prejudice and Zombies (2009)

Christina's list of Pride and Prejudice imitation novels (primarily historical romance)

1. *Affinity and Affection* {Susan Adriani}
2. *And This Out Life* (C. Allyn Pierson)
3. *Arts of Captivation, The* {Jan Austen}
4. *Assembly Such as This, An* (Pamela Aidan)
5. *Assumed Engagement* (Kara Louise)
6. *Confession of Fitzwilliam Darcy, The* {Mary Street}
7. *Consequence or The Darcys Give a Ball* {Elizabeth Newark}
8. *Conviction* {Skylar Hamilton Burris}
9. *Darcy & Elizabeth: Nights and Days at Pemberley* (Linda Berdoll)
10. *Darcy Connection, The* {Elizabeth Aston}
11. *Darcy's Dreams* {Regina Jeffers}
12. *Darcy's Story* {Janet Aylmer}
13. *Darcy's Temptation* {Regina Jeffers}
14. *Darcys, The* {Phyllis Furley}
15. *Darcys & the Bingleys, The* {Marsha Altman}
16. *Darcys at Year's End, The* {Sharon Lathan}
17. *Derbyshire* {Marie Högström}
18. *Desire and Duty* {Ted Bader}
19. *Diary of Henry Fitzwilliam Darcy, The* {Marjorie Fasman}
20. *Duty and Desire* (Pamela Aidan)
21. *Excessively Diverted* {Juliette Shapiro}
22. *Exploits & Adventures of Miss Alethea Darcy, The* {Elizabeth Aston}
23. *Honour and Humility* {Genevieve Wimer}
24. *Impulse and Initiative* (Abigail Reynolds)
25. *Jane Bites Back* {Michael Thomas Ford}
26. *Ladies of Longbourn, The* {Rebecca Ann Collins}
27. *Lady Catherine's Necklace* {Joan Aiken}
28. *Last Man in the World, The* (Abigail Reynolds)
29. *Letters from Pemberley* (Jane Dawkins)
30. *Me and Mr. Darcy* (Alexandra Potter)
31. *Miss de Bourgh's Adventure* {Joan Ellen Delman}
32. *Mistress of Pemberley* {Isobel Scott Moffat}
33. *More Letters from Pemberley* (Jane Dawkins)
34. *Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwilliam Darcy* {Sharon Lathan}
35. *Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife* (Linda Berdoll)
36. *Mr. Darcy's Daughter* {Rebecca Ann Collins}
37. *Mr. Darcy's Daughters* (Elizabeth Aston)
38. *Mr. Darcy's Decision* {Juliette Shapiro}
39. *Mr. Darcy's Diary* (Amanda Grange)
40. *Mr. Darcy's Diary* {Maya Slater}
41. *Mr. Darcy's Dream* {Elizabeth Aston}
42. *Mr. Darcy Presents His Bride* (Helen Halstead)
43. *Mrs. Darcy's Dilemma* {Diana Birchall}
44. *Mrs. Fitzwilliam Darcy and Other Stories* {Anne Fafoutakis}

45. *Netherfield Park Revisited* {Rebecca Ann Collins}
46. *Old Friends and New Fancies* {Sybil G. Brinton}
47. *Pemberley* (Emma Tennant)
48. *Pemberley Chronicles, The* (Rebecca Collins)
49. *Pemberley Manor* {Kathryn Nelson}
50. *Pemberley Remembered* {Mary Lydon Simonsen}
51. *Pemberley Shades* {Dorothy Bonivia-Hunt}
52. *Pleasures of Youth* {Jan Austen}
53. *Presumption* {Julia Baret}
54. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* {Seth Grahame-Smith}
55. *Single Man, Good Fortune, A* {Jan Austen}
56. *Second Mrs. Darcy, The* {Elizabeth Aston}
57. *Teverton Hall* {Jane Gillespie}
58. *These Three Remain* (Pamela Aidan)
59. *Trust and Triumph* {Norma Gatje-Smoth}
60. *Unequal Marriage, An* {Emma Tennant}
61. *Vanity and Vexation* {Kate Fenton}
62. *Virtue and Vanity* {Ted Bader}
63. *Women of Pemberley, The* {Rebecca Collins}

“Darcy” in 25 titles

“Pemberley” in 10 titles

Mantra of the “I Refuse to Settle for Anything Less than Mr. Darcy” Facebook Group.

“Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy of Pemberley - having beheld him (whether on screen or in the pages of a novel) - the embodiment of all that is manly, chivalrous, and right in the world - I know that I can never go back. I can never settle. I will wait for a man that I can bewitch - body and soul - and I refuse to settle for anything less than my own personal Mr. Darcy.”